

In the News

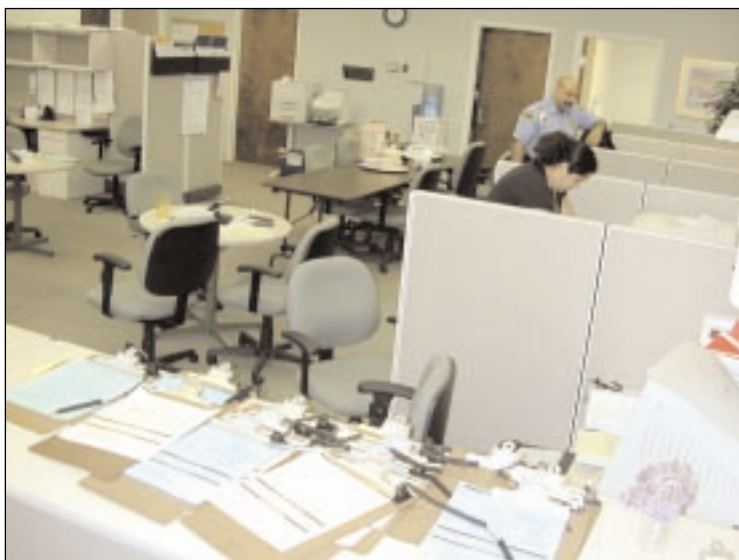
Help Yourself in Van Nuys

Assisting civil litigants without lawyers has become a high priority for the leaders of California's legal community, including those in the Superior Court of Los Angeles County.

A feature article in the June 22, 2001, edition of the *Los Angeles Times* discussed the increasing numbers of litigants going to court without lawyers, including the approximately 1,000 individuals who visit the Van Nuys Self-Help Legal Access Center each month. The *Times* article mentioned that the center opened in November 2000 and will serve as a model for courthouses across the county.

The *Times* article stated that the self-help center has three full-time paid staffers, including two attorneys, but depends largely on trained volunteers. The volunteers help visitors with such legal issues as evictions, small claims, family law matters, name changes, and temporary re-

straining orders. Although the center is open to anyone, most of its users have incomes below the federal poverty line, which means that, for instance, a family of four has an annual income under \$21,000.



The Van Nuys Self-Help Legal Access Center in Los Angeles County assists visitors with such legal issues as evictions, small claims, family law matters, name changes, and temporary restraining orders.

The exposure that the Van Nuys self-help center received in the *Los Angeles Times* has made more litigants aware of its services and enabled them to get help with their legal matters.

Other court-related programs in the news:

"A Good Interpreter Is Hard to Find," *Sacramento Bee*, July 9, 2001

Described how the Superior Court of Sacramento County provides court interpreters for 15 to 25 litigants each day.

"Grant Funds Technology," *Modesto Bee*, July 10, 2001

Reported that the Superior Court of Stanislaus County received a \$540,000 grant from the Judicial Council for equipment to improve the court's communication capabilities. The new equipment will allow for faster Internet connections and better networking.

"Project Aims to Make Court a Friendlier Place for Kids," *Daily Journal*, July 6, 2001

Reported that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a feasibility study for a supervised children's waiting room in each of the county's 13 courthouses that hear family law matters. ■

Council Adopts Energy Conservation Guidelines

In response to California's power situation, the Judicial Council at its July 13 meeting adopted energy conservation guidelines for all state courts. The council hopes that the guidelines will help reduce energy costs for the courts as well as contribute to an overall reduction in power consumption in the state.

Among other suggestions, the "Guidelines for Energy Conservation in California Court Facilities" advises the courts to reduce lighting levels, raise the settings of cooling system thermostats, and establish reasonable hours of operation for lights, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning.

"Many courts have already taken the initiative to implement energy conservation measures," noted Chief Justice Ronald M. George. "The support of all state courts is needed, however, to ensure that the California judicial branch does its part to address statewide energy needs through practical energy-saving measures."

COURTS ALREADY CONSERVING

Even before the council adopted its energy guidelines, courts around the state had begun to conserve energy at their facilities. For example, the complex that houses the California Supreme Court, the First District of the Court of Appeal, and the Administrative Office of the Courts has decreased its energy usage by 20 percent.

Superior courts throughout the state are also conserving energy wherever possible. Frank Martinez, Assistant Executive Officer of the Superior Court of Sacramento County, says his court is minimizing lighting where it can, such as in elevator waiting areas, and is encourag-

ing staff to shut down equipment when it is not in use.

The council encourages trial courts to work with their counties, and appellate courts to work with the state Department of General Services or with their landlords, to implement the guidelines. In addition, the council has

requested that the courts report on the steps they are taking to reduce energy consumption, to provide a means of assessing the courts' contributions to the overall conservation effort. ■

Guidelines for Energy Conservation in California Court Facilities

- ▶ Reduce lighting levels throughout the facility. This can be accomplished by removing some of the bulbs or tubes from general work-area lighting and by reducing lighting in hallways, lobbies, and other public areas. Encourage the use of task lighting in lieu of overhead lighting wherever possible. Eliminate decorative lighting.
- ▶ Increase the settings of cooling system thermostats, taking temperature zoning into consideration wherever possible. Such thermostats are often set in the range of 68 to 72 degrees and generally should be increased to 74 to 78 degrees. Courtrooms may be set at 70 to 74 degrees because the occupants are normally in formal business attire or robes.
- ▶ Establish reasonable hours of operation for lights and for heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. For example, in warmer regions, turn HVAC on at 6 a.m. rather than earlier, and turn it off at 6 or 7 p.m. rather than later; on weekends turn on HVAC only when actual use of

the facility is scheduled and for the limited time of building occupancy.

- ▶ Encourage informal dress, as appropriate, to help compensate for higher temperatures.
- ▶ Encourage employees to shut off lights and computers when they are not in use. Install motion detectors that turn off lights in unoccupied rooms. Turn off copiers and printers at night if they are not being used.
- ▶ Evaluate and incorporate, where possible, the detailed recommendations on energy conservation measures that are available from www.energy.dgs.ca.gov and from local utilities' Web sites and information offices.

Source: Administrative Office of the Courts



Bay Area Counties Receive Grants to Help Children

After a highly competitive proposal process, two Bay Area superior courts were among six sites nationwide selected by the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Violence Against Women Office to receive grants to improve their services to troubled families. The Superior Courts of San Francisco and Santa Clara Counties each received a grant for more than \$300,000 annually. The grants will help the courts devise more effective systems for delivering services to families who are experiencing concurrent domestic violence and child maltreatment and are involved in court proceedings.

Although adult domestic violence and child maltreatment often occur together, until recently many communities treated the two as separate incidents. In response, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) published *Effective Intervention in Domestic*

Violence and Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice, otherwise known as the "Greenbook." The Greenbook introduced a comprehensive set of principles and recommendations for developing more effective policies and programs aimed at keeping families safe and stable.

Last December, the DOJ announced that it had selected six "demonstration sites" to receive funds that would help them implement recommendations in the NCJFCJ's Greenbook. The DOJ provided the funding through its "Collaborations to Address Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment: A Public-Private Initiative." That initiative seeks to increase collaboration among courts, child protective services, domestic violence agencies, and others in the community to develop better delivery systems for services to families experiencing domestic violence and child maltreatment.

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

"What's most exciting about this grant is that the federal government is actually paying us to experiment," says Superior Court of San Francisco County Commissioner Marjorie A. Slabach. "The grant moneys have enabled us to try new methods of dealing with kids in domestic violence situations. We are being given the opportunity to ask: What would work best right here in San Francisco?"

Representatives from agencies in San Francisco that deal with children and domestic violence, including professionals from the Sheriff's, Mayor's, and District Attorney's Offices, serve on Greenbook project committees. But the primary collaborating partners in San Francisco's Greenbook project are the superior court, the Department of Human Services, and interested community members. The project's Community Advisory Committee, which consists of public

members—including past and current "clients" of the court and the Department of Human Services—currently reviews and makes recommendations on pending cases involving domestic violence and maltreatment of children. In addition, a committee of evaluators reviews old cases from juvenile dependency court and the Department of Public Health to see how outcomes affected procedure, how courts and agencies responded in the past, and how children were treated.

"Our focus is on getting the community involved, on learning what people actually need and want," says Commissioner Slabach, adding that the project was community-driven from the start. "Groups such as women's shelters and batterer treatment centers first provided the impetus for the project. This extensive grassroots activism was a key reason San Francisco was selected as a national Greenbook demonstration site."

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

"Santa Clara County stood out during the selection process as representative of an urban, socioeconomically diverse site," says Carol Barnett, Staff Attorney at Dependency Legal Services, who sits on the Executive Committee of Santa Clara's Greenbook project. "This was a perfect opportunity for us to become a model for many large, urban areas around the nation."

According to Ms. Barnett, well before the DOJ's request for proposals had been announced, a proactive group of professionals in the child protective services community in Santa Clara County had formed to study and discuss the Greenbook recommendations. One of those professionals was Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge Leonard P. Edwards, who had made major contributions to the Greenbook.

According to Ms. Barnett, these public-private meetings were the first of their kind in the local child protective services community, with many participants meeting each other for the first time. Their collaborative efforts were initially fueled by funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Now, with the recent Greenbook grant, Santa Clara County has an opportunity to investigate ways of dealing with children in domestic violence situations. "We are asking: Couldn't the kids be placed with the nonoffending parent?" adds Ms. Barnett. "Couldn't we instead provide the nonoffending parents with the services they need—with shelter, a safety plan, and appropriate services?"

For more information on San Francisco County's Greenbook project, e-mail Commissioner Marjorie A. Slabach at mslabach@sftc.org. For more information on Santa Clara County's Greenbook grant project, contact Project Manager Jennifer Sweeney, 408-882-0900; e-mail: sweeney@kidscommon.org. ■

2001–2002 Drug Court Mini-Grants Awarded

At its August 3 meeting, the Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee selected the recipients of the drug court mini-grants for 2001–2002.

The Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP) has made drug court mini-grants available through the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) since 1996. However, this is the first year that the AOC has been able to channel part of the funding toward teen and youth courts.

For fiscal year 2001–2002, OCJP is providing a pass-through grant of \$1 million to fund juvenile delinquency drug courts and teen/youth courts as part of the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant program.

Teen and youth courts are alternative approaches to the traditional juvenile justice system. Typically in these courts, a youth charged with an offense can opt to forgo the hearing and sentencing procedures of the juvenile courts and agree to appear before a sentencing forum made up of a jury of his or her peers under the supervision of a judge—also known as a peer court. Because the drug court mini-grant funding will be distributed through contract agreements with local court systems, only teen and youth courts based on a model that utilizes a judicial bench officer were considered for funding.

The committee made its selections based on the following

broad grant eligibility criteria, which were approved by the Judicial Council:

- Viability of the program and its current level of financial need;
- Consistency with the California Standards of Judicial Administration and other drug court guidelines;
- Involvement of a local steering committee;
- Successful completion of statistical and financial re-

porting requirements for previous mini-grant funding periods (if applicable); and

- Completeness and comprehensiveness of the application.

Thirteen superior courts received juvenile delinquency drug court awards, and 11 received teen/youth court awards. The grants will reimburse these counties' programs for their expenses incurred from September 1, 2001, through June 30, 2002.

For more information, contact Sandy Claire, Administrative Office of the Courts, 415-865-7632; e-mail: sandy.claire@jud.ca.gov. ■

Collaborative justice at work



The Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee met in the Community Room of the Santa Ana Police Department to discuss recommendations on the implementation of Proposition 36, decide on grant funding for juvenile delinquency drug courts and teen and youth courts (see story on this page), and hear a presentation on restorative justice from Superior Court of Los Angeles County Judge Candace Beason (standing). The committee is an example of the efforts being made by the courts, law enforcement, and others involved in the justice system to make collaborative problem solving a priority.

Counties Receiving 2001–2002 Delinquency Drug Court Awards

Butte, Contra Costa, Fresno, Kern, Mendocino, Nevada, Placer, Riverside, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Clara, Shasta, and Ventura

Counties Receiving 2001–2002 Teen/Youth Court Awards

Calaveras, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Humboldt, Imperial, Placer, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Sonoma, and Ventura